

On The Green:

Oahu's Military Golf Courses



The par-4 13th hole at the Kaneohe Golf Course on Marine Corps Base Hawaii was voted the best military golf hole in the world in 1998 by the readers of Navy Times. The Klipper course is often referred to as the "poor man's Pebble Beach", with holes that run up along the Koolau Mountains and Pacific Ocean where players are offered views of the beachgoers, surfers and occasional breaching humpback whales.

Story by PH2 Chad McNeeley
Revised by J03 Sunday Sawyer

Few would argue that Oahu offers military members the best opportunity to play golf on some of the nicest military courses in the U.S. for a fraction of the cost of playing on one of the island's private courses. No matter what your skill level or desire, military golf in Hawaii offers something for everyone.

Oahu boasts six championship courses owned and operated by their respective branches of the military, in addition to its nine-hole Walter Nagorski Golf Course, and two less challenging par-three courses.

The Navy operates two courses on the island. The Navy-Marine Golf Course located on Pearl Harbor Naval Station is an 18-hole championship course that measures 6,771 yards, but plays quite a bit longer depending on the trade winds.

The course has been around for over half a century and has taken that time to grow some very large trees. The greens are small and extremely fast and the rough can be very long in places. If an errant tee shot ends up off the fairway under a group of trees, don't bother looking for an escape route up through the trees.

Take your medicine and pitch back into the fairway and try and save par. Many rounds have been ruined by the overly brave going for the shot of a lifetime trying to make birdie from under the trees, only to make double-bogey. The Navy-Marine course has a lighted driving range, a new putting green and a short-game area to work on pitches, chips and bunker play.

The course also opens up into a new clubhouse this month, to include Sam's Snead Tavern on the second floor. The new clubhouse is adjacent to the old building.

The second course operated by the Navy is on the former Barbers Point Naval Air Station. Today the former air station is known as the Kalaeloa Community Development District. But the 18-hole course is still owned and operated by the Navy and sees much use from the military members who live on the Ewa plain.

The course is mostly a flat track of land that plays to a relatively short 6,403-yard par-72. Despite the lack of elevation change and length, the course lays open to the full brunt of the trade winds that blow down from the Koolau Mountains, giving even a routine shot a varied degree of difficulty.

It's those winds that make the small target-type greens stay firm and fast. This course may be short and flat, but a high score is certainly possible on any given day. Barber's Point, like Navy-Marine, has a lighted driving range, putting green, short game area and clubhouse with 19th Puka and restaurant. As an added bonus there is also a free seven-hole golf course on Ford Island. No reservations are necessary.

The Air Force throws its hat in the ring with its Mamala Bay Course, located on Hickam Air Force Base. Mamala Bay also measures a relatively short 6,412 yards from the white tees.

But the par 5s and long par 4s play back into the wind, making the course play much longer than measured. Also, the greens are small, leaving accuracy

with your wedges at a premium. And again, typical of all the Hawaii courses, the wind plays a major role in shot selection and leaves the greens dry and fast. The course also plays right along the aqua-green breakwater of Mamala Bay. In fact, the par 3-second hole the water literally laps right up next to the tee box.

Surrounded on three sides by the Bay and the infamous Diamond Head crater visible in the background, the tee box juts out, inviting the unthinkable thought of putting down your clubs for a swim. Mamala Bay also offers a daytime driving range, two putting greens and a short game area. The clubhouse



A golfer strokes the ball on the first hole, a 454-foot par-4, at the Navy Marine Golf Course. Oahu boasts six military owned and operated championship courses including the nine-hole Walter Nagorski Golf Course and two less challenging par-three courses.

restaurant looks down the hill to the 18th fairway watching golfers finish their rounds. Hickam also offers a par 3 course, the only lighted course available on the island.

The U.S. Army offers two 18-hole championship courses and the 9-hole Walter Nagorski Golf Course. The Nagorski Course is a par 68, which measures 5,661 yards. Eighteen holes can be played from two

sets of tees on second go-around.

The Kalakaua Course is located on Schofield Barracks and measures a short 6,186 yards to a par of 72. Although short, the Kalakaua Course and the Leilehua Golf Course, also located on Schofield Barracks, offer golfers a bit of a change from typical Hawaii golf courses. In the hills between the Waianae and Koolau mountain ranges, both courses are oftentimes wet from the common rain around the mountains, which makes them play much, much longer. The extremely large, mature trees that line each fairway also contribute to longer play by threatening to swat away any shot that fails to keep their line.

The Leilehua course measures a lengthy 6,916 yards and plays to a par of 72. The fairways are tight and the rough typically is long and wet from the rain. The combination trees, small greens, changes in elevation and long rough make the course one of the most challenging on the island. The two championship Army courses offer full driving ranges, multiple practice putting greens and practice sand bunkers. The Nagorski course has a putting green, bunker, and a range for short to mid-iron practice. All three courses also offer full pro shops for most golfing needs.

Finally, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, located on the windward side of the island in Kaneohe, has what might be the most interesting course on Oahu. The Kaneohe Klipper Golf Course is located right next to the Pacific Ocean. Several holes running right along the beach gives the course possibly the most beautiful, if not slightly distracting, view of any of the other courses in Hawaii.

The course has been called the "poor man's Pebble Beach" referring to the world famous links course on the Monterey Peninsula. The par four, 465-yard 13th was voted the best military golf hole by the Navy Times newspaper.

After climbing the hill to the tee box and looking over the grand vista that stretches in front of you, somehow you have to gather yourself for a needed long and straight tee shot. If you're lucky, and playing in the springtime, you might even see a breaching whale make its way along the beach.

If you're not so lucky, even the slightest push off the tee leaves your ball in the largest sand trap you could possibly imagine...literally on a public beach. The ball can be played from the beach, but it might be one of the most difficult shots you'll ever encounter.

After battling your way through the 13th, the fun just begins. The 14th is set up similar to its preceding hole, only shorter, and with a much smaller green protected by trees that knock down off-line approach shots. Again, as with all of the other military courses, the Klipper has a driving range, putting green and short game area.

The military in Hawaii offers a lot to its Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen in recreation and relaxation. The bargains offered through the different departments of MWR rival some of the nicest private and public golf courses on Oahu. Whether you're a beginner or a veteran player, the courses on Oahu cater to all skill levels with lessons from PGA teaching professionals, and practice areas that enable all players to hone their skills.

Oahu area military golf course information:

Navy:			
Navy Marine Golf Course	Pro Shop:	471-0348	
	Reservations:	471-0142	
Barber's Point Golf Course	Reservations:	682-1911	
Ford Island Golf Course	(Open Course)		
Air Force:			
Mala Bay Golf Course	Reservations:	449-6490	
Hickam Par-3	Reservations:	449-2093	
Army:			
Walter Nagorski Golf Course	Reservations:	438-9587	
Kalakaua Golf Course	Reservations:	655-9833	
Leilehua Golf Course	Reservations:	655-4653	
Marine Corps:			
Kaneohe Klipper Golf Course:	Pro Shop:	254-3220	
	Reservations:	254-1745	



The 18th hole at the Navy Marine Golf Course is a 375-foot par-4 near the new clubhouse which is expected to open the first week of October. Most of the area military golf courses have full driving ranges, practice putting greens, short game areas, pro shops and restaurants. Prices for a round of golf average between \$8 and \$15 depending on paygrade for active duty.

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